

Remarks at a State Dinner in Bangkok

November 26, 1996

Your Majesties, Your Royal Highnesses, Privy Counselors, Prime Minister, members of the Cabinet, the diplomatic corps, distinguished guests: The First Lady and I are deeply honored by the welcome we have received in Thailand. We are proud to visit during the year that celebrates His Majesty's 50th year on the throne.

We Americans claim a special connection with His Majesty because he was born in Massachusetts, where his father was studying at Harvard and his mother was a student at Simmons College. And of course, I feel a particular admiration for His Majesty, whose love of music, especially jazz, and whose skill on the saxophone are universally renowned. In his lifetime, the late Duke Ellington was called the King of Jazz. Now it seems to me that His Majesty can lay legitimate and literal claim to that title.

Our stay here, Your Majesty, is far too brief. But we have had time to appreciate the wonder of your country. Hillary saw it when she visited two northern provinces and shared the enchanting beauty of the ceremony of Loy Kraphong. We both have marveled at Bangkok, the City of Angels, where we see both the proud traditions of the past and the shining promise of the future.

Your Majesty, when you addressed the United States Congress 36 years ago, you noted that for all the distance that divides our people, still one thing unites us, the love of freedom. You were right then, and you are right today. Thailand's struggles for liberty at home and abroad have inspired nations all over the world. Thailand is one of our oldest friends and strongest allies. The treaty the United States signed with the Kingdom of Siam in 1833 was the very first treaty forged by our young Nation with any Asian nation.

In the last half-century we have fought side by side in Korea and Vietnam. We have stood together in promoting security in this region and around the world. Our nations have been partners in prosperity as well. And now we are working to build a new Pacific community where open societies, linked and

invigorated by open markets, give their people the tools, the confidence, the opportunity to make the most of their own lives.

Your Majesty, Thailand's growing role on the global stage is a fitting tribute to your leadership. You have guided Thailand through political crises. You have helped to secure a climate in which democracy can flourish. Your tireless efforts, and Her Majesty's, to advance rural development have been a model for all the world. Your integrity and devotion to your people has made you a symbol of unity and pride. To me it was especially telling that when your country's Olympic boxer won Thailand's first-ever gold medal this year in Atlanta, he strode triumphantly around the ring with a framed picture of you. So in celebrating our nations' partnership, we celebrate you as well.

Your Majesty, our great author Somerset Maugham once said as he gazed at this marvelous palace complex, "It makes you laugh with delight to think that anything so fantastic could exist on this somber Earth." So here, amid the brilliant colors, the heavenly spires of this wonderful place, the friendship between our people springs forth more vibrantly than ever.

Therefore, I ask that all of you join me in a toast to that friendship, to our alliance, and to long life for His Majesty, the King.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:36 p.m. in the Chakri Throne Hall at the Grand Palace.

Remarks at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska

November 26, 1996

Thank you. Thank you very much. You may have noticed from the news, I'm a little hoarse. But if you will be patient with me, I will try to say what is in my mind and heart for you.

First, Governor and Mrs. Knowles, General Gamble, Colonel Lake, Mayor Mystrom, Lieutenant Governor Ulmer, to the other distinguished leaders of our Air Force and Army who are here. All of you know that when I tell you I just couldn't go home without stopping here, I'm telling the truth. [Laughter]

I guess I could go home without seeing you, but that would be my loss. Hillary and I look forward so much to the opportunities we have to come here to see the people who serve our Nation, who serve particularly in the Asia-Pacific region where I have just spent a number of days in Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand, and to see your families. I want to thank you for what you do. I want to tell you that, once again, I see from my talks with leaders throughout the world how important our leadership in this region is for peace, for stability, for prosperity and how much people all over the Asia-Pacific region look to you, trust you, believe in you, and see America in you. I thank you for that, and you should be very, very proud.

As Hillary and I go home for Thanksgiving we'll be giving special thanks this year, because it's Military Families Appreciation Week, for the families of our men and women in uniform throughout the world. From Bosnia to the Middle East, to Haiti, to the DMZ in Korea, here in Alaska, and in countries throughout the world, in bases all over the United States, I have seen the sacrifices and the support of our military families. I'm so grateful to all of you who have brought your children here today. I hope I get to shake hands with as many of them as possible. Those of you in the back who have your children on your shoulders, I thank you for that. I hope they will always remember that their parents served their country with pride and honor and that they had a chance to see the President thank their parents for their service.

To all of you in our families—I know here at Elmendorf alone there are 10,000 dependents—I know that the national security would not be possible without you. I was so moved by General McCaffrey's story of his own experience. I have seen that in military support families in accidents which cost the lives of our military personnel and in losses in active-duty service. But every day I see it in the support you give in countless ways to make it possible for families to stay together, for children to be raised properly, for families to support each so that our country can be properly defended.

So on this Thanksgiving Day, for all of our many blessings—and I've got a lot of things

to be thankful for, including having my contract renewed—[laughter]—I want you to know when our family, including a lot of our extended family, gathers on Thursday at Camp David, we will be thanking God for all of you who make our country the greatest, strongest force for freedom in human history.

God bless you, and thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:17 p.m. Alaska time in the Hangar One after crossing the international dateline. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Tony Knowles of Alaska and his wife, Susan; Lt. Gen. Patrick K. Gamble, USAF, Commander, Alaskan Command; Col. William J. Lake, USAF, Commander, Third Wing; Mayor Rick Mystrom of Anchorage; Lt. Gov. Fran Ulmer; and Barry R. McCaffrey, Director of National Drug Control Policy. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Proclamation 6959—World AIDS Day, 1996

November 26, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

We dedicate World AIDS Day to the memory of those we have lost to HIV and AIDS and to our quest to help those who are living with this disease. The theme of this ninth observance of World AIDS Day, "One World, One Hope," reminds us that AIDS is a global pandemic and that HIV recognizes no geographic boundaries. Today, an estimated 21.8 million adults and children worldwide are living with HIV/AIDS, and we anticipate that as many as 3 million more will become infected with HIV in this year alone.

Of the almost 6 million men, women, and children around the world who have died of AIDS, more than 330,000 have been Americans. Each day, 100 of our fellow citizens lose their lives to this disease, and nearly 200 more are diagnosed with AIDS. The threat that HIV and AIDS pose to our Nation and the world has demanded a national response involving government, industry, communities, families, and individuals. We have put our best scientific minds to work on research, and our most talented public health professionals have strived to prevent the spread of